

2025



CITSAC

Centro de Investigación en Tecnologías
y Saberes Comunitarios



WHAT IS CITSAC?

CITSAC is a space that promotes the production and exchange of community knowledge and strengthens capacities and collective processes fostering el Buen Vivir.¹

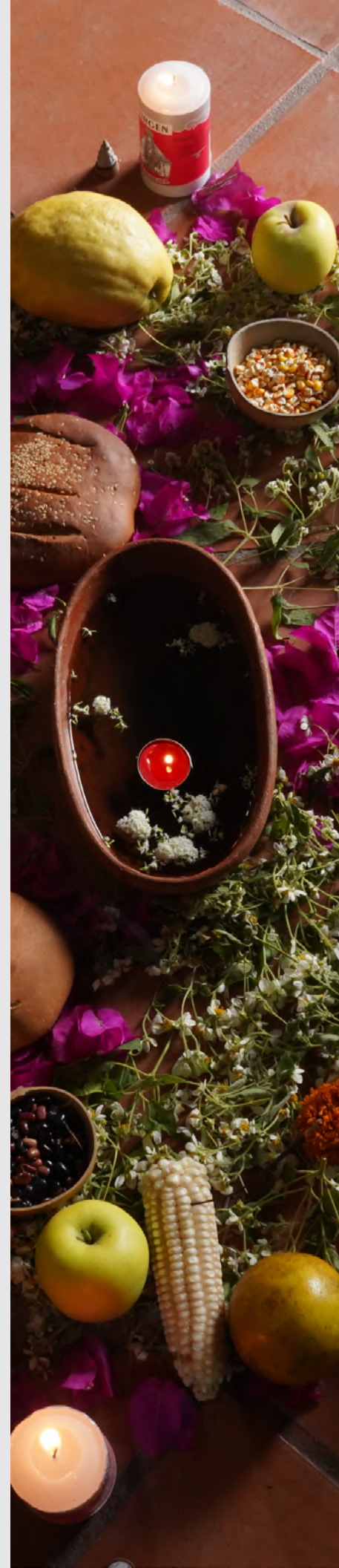
BRIEF HISTORY

CITSAC was founded in 2019 through a collaboration between Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad (REDES A.C.) and Rhizomatica. Over the years, we have built strategic alliances with other organizations, universities, research centers, and government institutions to support research, training, and knowledge production. SINÉ-Comunarr, SURCO A.C., CESDER, Radio Nandhia, ISIA, CIESAS, and the Universidad Iberoamericana are some of CITSAC's partner organizations.

OUR GOAL

Support, link and disseminate processes of knowledge exchange and the revival of collective wisdom at the local level that deepens Buen Vivir as defined through the communities' own objectives, and linked to knowledge networks and practices that contribute to the decolonization of knowledge more broadly.

1. Literally "Good Living"; a way of life that seeks the integral wellbeing of people, communities and Mother Earth, respecting natural equilibrium and community relations.





SCOPE



3 EDITIONS OF THE PROGRAM

to support and assist community-based applied research projects in Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Mexico.



38 APPLIED

research projects supported.

MORE THAN 40 AFFILIATED COLLECTIVES FROM 10 STATES:

Chiapas, Estado de Mexico, Guerrero, Michoacán, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Sonora, and Veracruz.



OVER 17 INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-DESCENDANT PEOPLES/GROUPS ACCOMPANIED:

Binnizá (Zapoteco), Ha shuta Enima (Mazateco), Kitse cha'tnio (Chatino), Maya, Me' phaa (Tlapaneco), Ayuuk jä'äy (Mixe), Nahua, Ngiba (Popoloca), Ñuu savi (Mixteco), P'urhépecha, Tojol-ab'al, Tseltal, Tsotsil, Tutunakú, Yaqui, Yoreme (Mayo) and Zoque.



3 FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

to exchange experiences in applied research with more than 100 attendees.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

of 6,500 followers on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).





OUR APPROACH

At the Centro de Investigación en Tecnologías y Saberes Comunitarios (CITSAC), we begin from the need to rethink conventional ways of structuring and producing knowledge, often dominated by external and hegemonic perspectives. We understand that community processes are not linear or one-directional, but rather dynamic, diverse, and in constant dialogue with local realities. Therefore, we seek to support the systematization and sharing of community-based knowledge, recognizing collective efforts and highlighting those who have historically been marginalized.

At CITSAC, we seek to break away from extractivist models of research in which academia obtains information for its own purposes. Instead, we promote forms of research that emerge from the communities themselves, based on dialogue and the recognition and legitimation of local contexts. This approach has allowed us not only to support the revitalization of local knowledge, but also to explore new ways to communicate and validate this knowledge in diverse spaces, from within the communities themselves all the way to international fora. We are committed to a process that values not only the outcomes of research, but also the paths taken, highlighting collective learning and lived experiences.





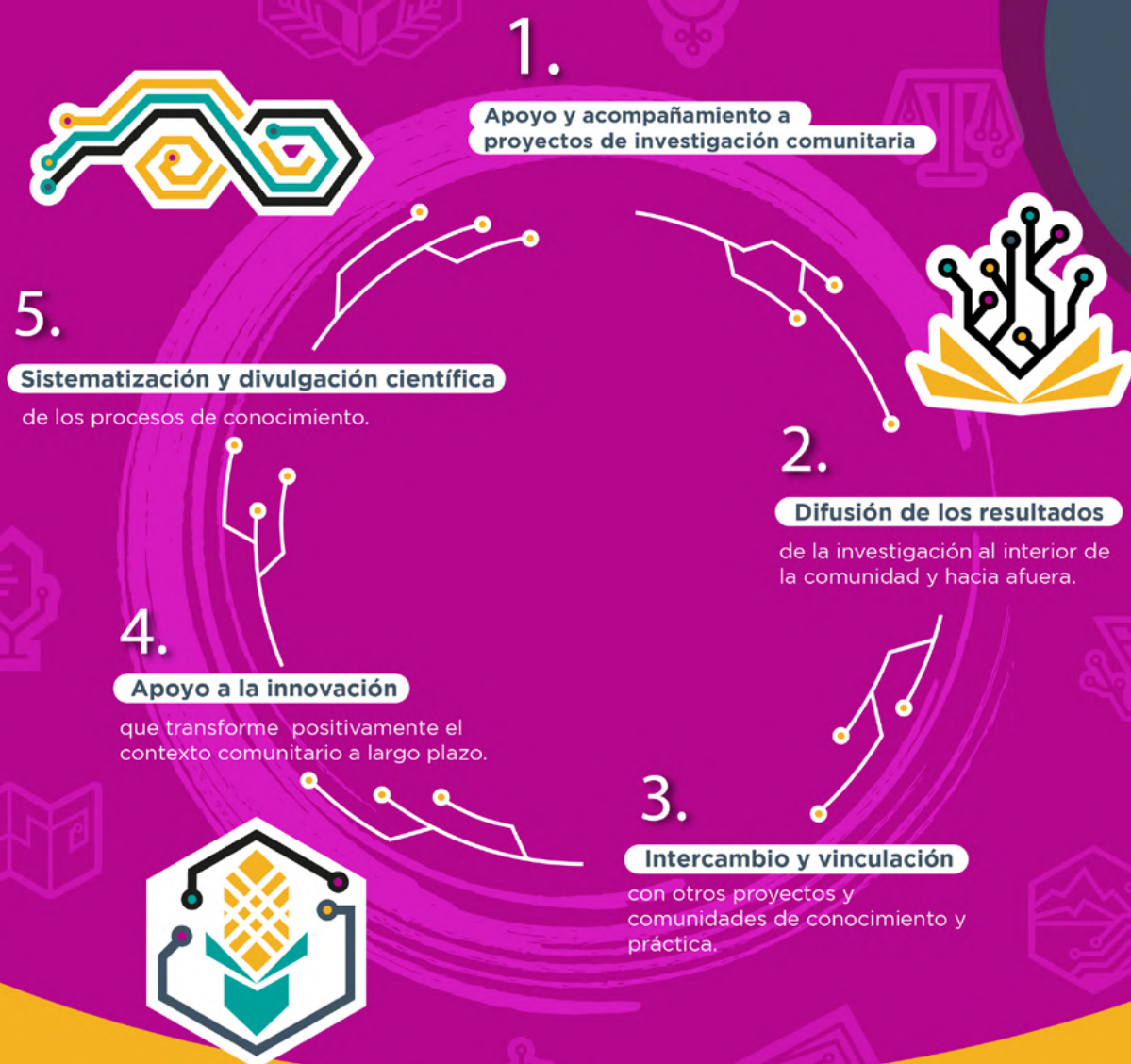
We have learned that it is often not enough to simply do things; it is also necessary to devise ways to communicate, contextualize, and support community-level efforts. We understand systematization as a key tool for sharing and returning the results of research processes to everyone in the community, ensuring that this knowledge is useful and transformative. Therefore, we promote support networks that strengthen local capacities and build knowledge that can be used to address common challenges creating bridges between community experiences and broader recognition of their knowledge, ensuring that communities are not only protagonists of research and knowledge production processes, but also the direct beneficiaries of their outcomes.





OUR METHOD

CITSAC promotes a cycle of strengthening community knowledge revitalization and generation processes, generally in contexts in which local communities face constant challenges. This approach not only seeks to renew and strengthen traditional practice and wisdom, but also to foster the creation of new knowledge that responds to the current needs of communities.



Ciclo de
fortalecimiento
a procesos de
rescate y
generación
de conocimiento
comunitario



CITSAC PROGRAMS

CITSAC's activities are organized into three main programs:

- Support and accompaniment program for community-based applied research projects in indigenous and afro-descendant communities in Mexico
- Experience sharing and exchange program
- Innovation, systematization, and scientific outreach program

1. Support and accompaniment program for community-based applied research projects in indigenous and afro-descendant communities in Mexico

This program strengthens knowledge exchange and the revitalization of collective community knowledge at the local level.

3 EDITIONS: 2020-2021; 2022-2023; 2024-2025.

38 SUPPORTED PROJECTS

Thematic Areas of the Supported Applied Research Projects



Historical and identity-based knowledge



Traditional culinary knowledge and food sovereignty



Territorial defense



Gender studies



Language preservation



Social and economic innovation



Appropriate and eco-technologies



Normative systems



Community health and traditional medicine



Environmental conservation and sustainability



Community-based education



Indigenous and community communication

Learn about some of the projects that have been part of this program:



Collective: Grupo de Trabajo Transdisciplinario de Afroaventura Tours



**Another form of tourism is possible:
community participation to promote
environmental conservation on Guerrero's
Costa Chica**

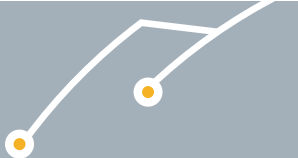


Environmental
conservation and
sustainability

“

“Don Toño, a 75-year-old fisherman from Tecomate Pesquería, has been an active part of community environmental monitoring since its inception. He guided us through 6 kilometers of the lagoon, showing great interest and concern for the health of the mangroves. At the end, he asked us for a map of the lagoon for the cooperative he directs.”

Leticia Carpio and Arturo Cortes,
participants in CITSAC 2024-2025 Applied Research Program



On Guerrero's Costa Chica, Grupo de Trabajo Transdisciplinario de Afroaventura Tours, made up of afro-descendants and guardians of the territory like Leticia and Arturo, promote alternative tourism that respects history, biodiversity, and the right of communities to decide on their own future. In the face of high-impact tourism expansion, they are committed to local and intergenerational participation in environmental monitoring and community-based risk management.

With the support of CITSAC, Afroaventura Tours is promoting a project called "Toward an alternative and sustainable tourism proposal for San Marcos, Guerrero," where children, youth, and seniors organize to observe changes in the lagoon, manage water and natural resources, and strengthen community responses to environmental risks. This perspective reaffirms that sustainability emerges from local knowledge, commitment and action.

Each tour, shared story, and monitoring effort reinforces the idea that tourism can strengthen local culture and the economy without losing identity or ecological balance.





❖ ACHIEVEMENTS ❖

Two environmental monitoring sessions of the Tecomate Pesquería Lagoon; identification of 36 bird species; website to promote rural tourism (in development); identification of 24 local partners and organizations that can offer their services, experiences, and tourism products; incorporation of community risk management as a new line of work; increased community participation in actions that promote environmental conservation; creation of a new project "SE JAGUAR: Strengthening Afro-Mexican youth as climate guardians"; creation of the "Escuela Popular Afrocosteña", a popular education initiative; social impact for 450 people; promotion of environmental education for children.

Other identified results include the strengthening of leadership skills among the young members of Afroaventura; increased recognition of the territory through research; community participation, and the creation of strategic alliances with researchers, activists, and social organizations.

Learn about other project that have been part of this program:



Collective: Red de Guardianes de la Milpa y la Biodiversidad (REGMABI)



The Milpa, a Living Learning Space: Ancestral Practices of Gathering, Selecting, and Safeguarding Native Seeds in Chiapas



Traditional culinary
knowledge and food
sovereignty

“

“During the research process, we revalued our knowledge and strengthened our methodology through community integration, local experience, and collective participation.”

Lusbey Méndez Santiz and Claudia Irene Sánchez Gómez,
participants in CITSAC 2024-2025 Applied Research Program

Lusbey and Irene, Maya-Tzeltal women defenders of the rights of children, indigenous women, and ancestral wisdom, are leading the project “Ancestral Practices of Gathering, Selecting, and Safeguarding Native Seeds”

as part of CITSAC's 2024-2025 Applied Research Program through their collective Red de Guardianes de la Milpa y la Biodiversidad (REGMABI).

REGMABI is made up of representatives from the Zoque, Ch'ol, Tseltal, and Mam peoples, in the Frailesca region. They work from within their own territories to preserve native seeds through the milpa system; an ancient agricultural practice that serves as a living-learning space where women and men share knowledge and strengthen culture and food security. Through dialogue and a milpa-based pedagogy, the guardians teach, protect biodiversity, and sustain their communities.

“We resist external narratives about ‘development’ and instead commit to processes built from within, where community researchers weave knowledge through voluntary, collective, and transformative actions.”

”





ACHIEVEMENTS

Development of a booklet on ancestral practices; creation of a network of rural women; and reactivation of a farming plot in Oxchuc, Chiapas.

The following have also been achieved: recognition among rural women of the importance of transmitting local knowledge and safeguarding native seeds; community-based seed exchange; and the revival of “mano vuelta”² practices to support each other during sowing and harvesting seasons.



2. Mano Vuelta is a communitarian form of organization based on solidarity and the reciprocation of labor among community members.



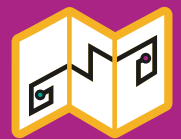
Learn about other project that have been part of this program:



Collective: U Chak Lu'umil Ch'e'en'ob



**The mayan culture is not a distant echo,
but a vibrant voice still telling its story:
Restoration of the Kancabchén community
museum, Quintana Roo**



Historical and identity-
based knowledge



“More than just a space, it means having the freedom to speak and express our Mayan culture; it means sharing our roots with our community, whether through photographs or archaeological pieces. For us, it’s a way to reclaim our cultural rights and freedom of expression.”

Doris Adriana Tun Chan and Julio César Cab Uc
participants in CITSAC 2024–2025 applied Research Program

In the Mayan community of Kancabchén, Quintana Roo, memory lives on in the red-colored earth and in the stories of the elders. Aware of this heritage, 15 young people formed the collective U Chak Lu'umil Ch'e'en'ob (“Red land of wells”) to revitalize the

U Kúuchil Uchbeen Ba'alo'ob Maya'ob community museum ("Place of ancient mayan objects"), a space that safeguards the identity and knowledge of the people, but which was inactive due to lack of resources.

Doris and Julio have shared this project beyond their community, emphasizing that the museum does not merely safeguard objects, it tells the story of a living territory. Their work, along with their community, reaffirms their right to remember, to exist, and to tell their own story.

"Our greatest dream is to reconnect with the knowledge left by our grandparents and to recognize that within our community there is wisdom we must treasure and revalue so that it continues to be passed on to new generations."

”

❖ ACHIEVEMENTS ❖

Reopening of the U Kúuchil Uchbeen Ba'alo'ob Maya'ob community museum in Kancabchén. More than a physical restoration, the museum's rehabilitation is an act of resistance and renewal. With new strategies and learning spaces, the collective is building bridges between the past and the future. In every testimony collected and every object recovered, the identity of Kancabchén is strengthened, demonstrating that Mayan culture is not a distant echo, but a vibrant and present voice still telling its story, now through the its own youth.



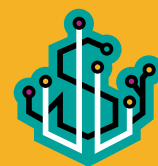
Learn about other project that have been part of this program:



Collective: Mujeres Alfareras Yasen



Redefining the art of clay: strengthening family bonds through the innovative design of a tortilla warmer made by Ngigua women potters from Puebla



Social and economic
innovation



"As homemakers, we are always the last to sit down and eat because we're busy taking care of the family, sometimes we end up eating alone. With the Calor de Hogar project, we want to honor the time of rural women so they can share meals with their families, strengthening bonds and transmitting knowledge, cultural, and community practices."

Ilhiana Carrillo and Fabiola Bravo Cortés
participants in CITSAC 2024-2025 Applied Research Program

In Los Reyes Metzontla, a Ngigua community in Zapotitlán, Puebla, known for its burnished pottery, Ilhiana and Fabiola mold more than clay: they shape a story of heritage and creativity. Members of the Mujeres Alfareras Yasen group, they preserve an ancestral craft while reimagining it with designs that respond to current needs without losing their cultural roots.

Through the Calor de Hogar applied research project, supported by CITSAC, the Alfareras Yasen reimagine the use of clay in everyday life and challenge traditional gender roles, seeking to reclaim Indigenous women's place at the family table.

❖ ACHIEVEMENTS ❖

To address this challenge, the project developed a practical and innovative solution to enhance family togetherness: a tortilla warmer that uses the natural properties of clay, its ability to retain heat and enhance flavors, while embodying values of unity and care.

This device preserves the warmth, texture, and flavor of the handmade tortillas consumed at each meal, making it possible for them to be prepared just before both women and men sit down to eat together. Through their work, these women demonstrate that tradition and innovation are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined to preserve and revitalize cultural heritage.



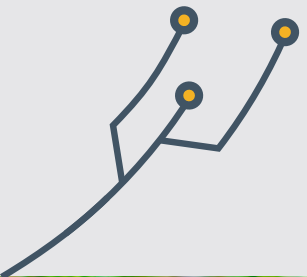
2. Experience sharing and exchange program

The Experience Sharing and Exchange Program is an initiative that seeks to promote the sharing of local knowledge within and among communities. It is made possible through visits by representatives from one community to another, following a program that includes activities focused on training and knowledge sharing. This strengthens community capacities and collective processes oriented toward Buen Vivir.

Examples of Exchanges:



In December 2021, the Traditional Medicine Exchange was held by the U kúuchil k Ch'i'ibalo'on Community Center in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo. Members of the Emenda and Tiempo de Lluvias collectives from Angahuan, Michoacán attended, exchanging knowledge on plants and traditional medicine. Both collectives had met during the 2020-2021 edition of the Applied Research Program.

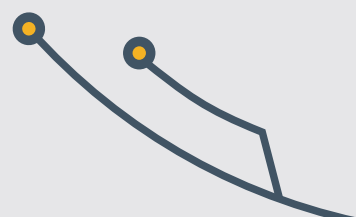




During the summer of 2023, the community of Santiago Teotlasco, Oaxaca, identified the need to create a community clinic to address community health needs. Following this, a visit was made to the Tosepan Pajti Cooperative in Cuetzalan, Puebla, where a workshop was held on the production of ointments and the use of tinctures using local medicinal plants.

3. Innovation, systematization, and scientific outreach program

At CITSAC, we develop research priorities focused on community bioeconomy and alternative energies, integrating innovative approaches that promote environmental restoration and socio-economic sustainability. These research efforts aim to generate models and techniques that strengthen community-based resource management, the responsible use of technologies, and the creation of opportunities to improve well-being and resilience in local territories.



Examples of research projects in the **restorative community bioeconomy** focus area:

- Plant-based bioremediation (phytoremediation) of areas contaminated by mine tailings.
- Utilization of mesquite by Indigenous and rural communities in arid and semi-arid regions of Sonora, Mexico: toward establishing sustainable local bioeconomies focused on food security.

Research Projects in the **Alternative Energy** focus area:

- Expansion of the local energy distribution network and increased production capacity of the micro-hydroelectric system in the Zapotec Indigenous community of Santa María Yaviche in the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca.
- Small-scale biodiesel production using waste vegetable oil, aiming to prevent environmental contamination caused by improper disposal into sewage systems and rivers.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO COLLABORATE WITH CITSAC?

Contributions from individuals and institutions whose interests and values are aligned with those of CITSAC help promote the development of new projects and support the continuity of the cycle of strengthening community-based knowledge revitalization and creation processes. CITSAC is able to receive tax-deductible financial donations in the US and Mexico, which provides an opportunity to strengthen the sustainability and reach of our efforts.



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